

THE LUTHERAN CHORALE AS PROCLAMATION OF THE GOSPEL AND CONFSSIONAL  
STATEMENT

February 9, 1981

By Richard A. Maurice

I The Roots of Music in Western Civilization

A. Music is a social art. It has the following social uses:

1. religious, liturgical--both drama & song
2. military--march & song
3. dramatic--dramatic song, epic recitation
4. folk--song & dances, for both amusement & work
5. art--which gives a new function & significance to the perfected aspects of the other four.

B. Music developed into a scientific system.

C. Music expresses various moods or messages.

II Music in the Early Christian Church

A. The congregation took part in the musical part of the service.

B. Music did not develop so fast as the other arts.

C. The contribution of the Old Testament Church.

D. The contribution of Asia Minor and Greece.

E. The contribution of the Roman Empire.

F. The result of centralization in the Church.

(The resource for the above material is A HISTORY OF MUSIC by Theodore M. Finney.)

III An Evaluation and Comparison of the Lutheran Chorale and the Reform Hymn

IV Rules for Evaluating Music and Hymns for Christian Worship

- A. The words or text must reign supreme. They must be good theology, objective in nature, predominantly emphasizing what God has done for us--not in us.
- B. The music must serve or carry the word. It must allow for contemplation of the words.
- C. The message of the music must be compatible with the words. Music is not neutral. It does have a message of its own altogether apart from the words.
- D. The music must be singable.
- E. The idea of association must also be considered.

All of the above rules define what is known basically as the Lutheran Chorale.

The Lutheran Chorale is objective in nature. The words emphasize what God has done for us. The music supports and emphasizes the words. It also is objective in nature. It is characterized by a slow, smooth flowing melody without much rhythm. It evokes a deep thought-filled emotion.

The Reform hymn is very subjective in nature. The words emphasize what God has done in us. The music likewise supports & emphasizes the subjective words. It is also subjective in nature. The music is characterized by a fast, rhythmic and not so smooth melody. It often evokes a light-hearted emotion which may manifest itself with foot-tapping, hand-clapping, etc.

Brethren, we have been truly blessed with the gift of the Lutheran Chorale. It truly serves as a vehicle of the Word in our worship. The words of our hymns are not only theologically sound, but the music also conveys a good message. With its rich harmony it offers us a good solid foundation. The slow melody offers us ample time to think about Whom or what we are singing.

God forbid that we ever despise or reject it. May we always appreciate and treasure it for what it is: a truly beautiful vehicle for carrying God's Word.

"Of all the Joys that are on earth  
Is none more dear, nor higher worth  
Than what in my sweet songs is found  
And instruments of various sound.  
When friends and comrades sing in tune  
All evil passions vanish soon:

Hate, anger, envy cannot stay,  
All gloom and heartaches melt away.  
The lust of wealth, the cares that cling,  
Are all forgotten while we sing.  
The heart grows still when I am heard,  
And opens to God's Truth and Word."

Martin Luther

AN ADDENDUM

Our hymnal is far more diverse than most people realize. It includes dated music over a period of at least 1400 years.

<u>date</u>	<u>Hymn #</u>	
600	233	Come, Holy Ghost, Creator Blest
800	6	Kyrie, God Father in Heaven Above
900		
1000		
1100	187	Christ Is Arisen
1200	62	Oh, Come, Oh, Come, Immanuel
1300	90	Come, Your Hearts and Voices Raising
1400	224	Come, Holy Ghost, God and Lord!
1500	210	The Strife Is O'er, the Battle Done
1600	192	Awake, My Heart, with Gladness
1700	144	Jesus, Grant that Balm and Healing
1800	153	Stricken, Smitten, and Afflicted
1900	283	God's Word Is Our Great Heritage

Also remember that while most hymn melodies are dated, the melody itself may have been passed on from centuries before, simply waiting to be "composed."

This diversity is tremendous. It reminds one that he is a part of a worldwide church which spans many centuries...that Christ died for all, including people of all ages and of all nationalities.

An excellent example of good worship music is our collection of 25 Easter hymns in The Lutheran Hymnal. You will note that most of them were written before 1700. Most of them were written during the period of the Lutheran Chorale.

<u>date</u>	<u>Hymn #'s</u>
1100	187, 190, 195
1200	193, 203
1500	189, 197, 202, 210
1600	192, 194, 196, 201, 204, 206, 207, 208, 209, 211
19	1700
	1800
6	

Of the 660 hymns in The Lutheran Hymnal there are a total of 380 different melodies. These melodies were composed by the following composers:

18 Americans	4 Scandinavian
59 British	3 French
58 German	2 Italian
	1 each of Dutch, Finnish, Hebrew, Polish, Russian & Slovak

Of the 660 hymns 347 are translations from the following languages:

248 German	9 Greek	2 Italian
46 Latin	6 Slovak	1 each of Dutch, Welsh & Finnish
31 Scandinavian	2 French	

There 89 translators: 47 American & 42 British.

Of the 313 original hymns 267 are by British authors, 45 Americans & 1 Canadian.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bangert, Martin J., "Sacred Music With Special Reference to the Lutheran Church," The Christian News, page 7, May 5, 1980.
- Buszin, Walter F., "Theology and Church Music as Bearers and Interpreters of the Verbum Dei," Musical Heritage of the Church, edited by T.H. Nickel, St. Louis, Concordia Publishing House, 1963. (Vol. 6)
- Caemmerer, Richard R., "The Congregational Hymn as the Living Voice of the Gospel," Musical Heritage of the Church, edited by T. H. Nickel, St. Louis, Vol. V, Concordia Publishing House, 1959.
- Clynes, Manfred, Sentics—The Touch of Emotions, New York, Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1977.
- Dickinson, Helen, "Martin Luther's Use of Hymns," Sursum Corda, Vol. XIII, No. 4, pages 114-116, 1951.
- Dommer, Robert, "What Makes A Good Hymn?," Journal of Theology, Vol. XX, No. 4, pages 2-16, Dec., 1980.
- Egge, Mandus A., "The Hymnody of the Reformation—Then & Now," Musical Heritage of the Church, edited by T. H. Nickel, Vol. VII, St. Louis, Concordia Publishing House, 1970.
- Finney, Theodore M., A History of Music, New York, Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1947.
- ★ Grieger, V. S., "The Church of The Reformation and Her Music," The Christian News, pages 8-10, April 7, 1980.
- The Lutheran Hymnal, St. Louis, Concordia Publishing House, 1941.
- Naumann, Martin J., "The Character of Christian Worship," Musical Heritage of the Church, Vol. V, St. Louis, Concordia Publishing House, 1959.
- Polack, W. G. (compiled by), The Handbook to the Lutheran Hymnal, St. Louis, Concordia Publishing House, 1942.
- Reed, Luther D., Worship, Philadelphia, Muhlenberg Press, 1959.
- Reuning, Daniel, G., "Confessional Music," Concordia Theological Quarterly, Vol. 44, No. 4, pages 213-217, Oct. 1980.
- Luther's Works, Vol. 53, page XIX, Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1965.